

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

I grew up in the 1940s and 1950s we had a tin bath had a bath once a week in the old tin bath. A long drop toilet in the back yard. A shilling gas meter in the kitchen And we played out in the back streets. By today's standard you would call use very poor But we was happy playing in the streets No fancy toys a doll or a gun that's all we ever had.

In the heart of a small, tight-knit neighborhood in the 1940s and 1950s, I grew up in a world that might seem unimaginable to many today. We were far from wealthy, but we were rich in the simple joys of life.

Our home was a humble, two-bedroom cottage, nestled amongst rows of similar houses, each with its own unique story to tell. Our bathtub was a trusty old tin one, and it was a weekly ritual for the family. Every Saturday evening, my mother would heat a kettle full of water on the gas stove, and with great care, she'd fill that tin bath with warm water. It was a sacred event, and my siblings and I would eagerly wait our turn. There was no rush; the warmth of the bath and the joy of splashing around made it a special occasion, one we looked forward to all week.

In the back yard, a small wooden shed concealed our long drop toilet. Venturing out there in the middle of the night was an adventure in itself. The stars above were our nightlight, and the crisp night air provided a quiet serenity, broken only by the chirping of crickets.

The heart of our home was the kitchen, where we gathered around the cozy warmth of the gas stove. A shilling meter clung to the wall, and it was my father's responsibility to ensure it was fed regularly with coins. The coin's clink as it dropped into the meter was a familiar sound, a constant reminder of our modest means. Despite our limited resources, my mother always managed to whip up the most delicious meals, stretching every ingredient to its fullest potential. The scent of her cooking filled our home with comfort and love, reminding us that happiness could be found in the simplest of moments.

But our most cherished memories were formed in the back streets of our neighborhood. We played games like hopscotch, marbles, and hide-and-seek with the neighborhood kids. Our toys were far from extravagant—a hand-me-down doll with a missing eye, a wooden gun lovingly carved by my father—but they brought us endless joy.

During those carefree days, we were rich in imagination. The world was our canvas, and the possibilities were boundless. We created adventures, built forts from discarded crates, and raced homemade go-karts down the sloping alleyways.

Life was hard by today's standards, but we didn't know any different, and we didn't care. We were surrounded by a sense of community, where everyone knew each other, and the phrase "it takes a village" truly meant something. Neighbors looked out for one another, lending a hand when times were tough and sharing in the small victories.

In the evenings, as the sun dipped below the horizon and the gas lamps flickered to life, we'd gather on the stoops of our homes, laughing, talking, and sharing stories. Our hearts were light, our spirits were high, and our lives were woven together in a tapestry of simple pleasures. Looking back on those days, it's easy to see that we were indeed very poor by material standards, but we were wealthy in love, laughter, and the kind of happiness that can only be found in the embrace of a close-knit community and the simplicity of childhood. Those times may have faded into history, but the memories live on, etched forever in the heart of a time gone by.

By Donald Jay.